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COUNTRY NOTE**

Ecuador

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country note for Ecuador for a programme of cooperation for the period 1999 to 2003.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. By 1999, Ecuador will have 12.5 million inhabitants: 41 per cent will be less than 18 years old; 35 per cent will be indigenous people and 6 per cent will be of African descent; and 63 per cent will live in cities. Fifty-five per cent of income is in the hands of 10 per cent of the population, which increases vulnerability and impoverishment (67 per cent are poor). Informal employment (48 per cent) has increased substantially over the past five years. The unemployment rate for the 20- to 29-year-old age-group is 9 per cent, compared to 5 per cent overall, and 16 per cent of children aged 12-14 years work. The social sector budget decreased from 41 per cent in 1980 to 25 per cent in 1996, affecting particularly the education and health sectors. Only five of the goals of the national plan of action (NPA) had been achieved by the middle of the decade: polio eradication; salt iodization; tuberculosis vaccination; and the reduction of first grade drop-out and repetition. Social information systems for adequate planning, monitoring and evaluation are lacking.

2. The right to special protection is a challenge despite new laws adapted to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children are commonly subject to harmful child labour, abandonment, maltreatment, sexual abuse, early pregnancy,

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* E/ICEF/1998/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session in 1998.

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drug dependence and juvenile violence. Special protection services are insufficient, often leading to restriction of the individual liberty of young people. There are problems of quality and efficiency of educational and health services, as well as inequities in access to them. The main problems in education are repetition of first grade, drop out and insufficient coverage in early and preschool education. The infant mortality rate is 49 per 1,000 live births, but 63 for the indigenous population. Every day, 40 children aged 1-4 years old die. The maternal mortality rate is 150 per 100,000 live births, but 390 for the Indian population. Initiation to sexual activity is relatively early, increasing the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. The rate of adolescent pregnancies (15-19 years old) has increased to 18 per cent.

3. The country has undergone a political crisis, which has affected democratic institutions and the capacity to govern. A temporary Constitutional Government has scheduled presidential elections for August 1998. Although the mid-term review (MTR) indicated weak grass-roots organization, the crisis has revealed the capacity of citizens to react and participate, which should be promoted and strengthened.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

4. Since 1988, UNICEF cooperation with the Government has promoted social policies that give priority to children and women. At first, cooperation centred on the survival of children. The current programme of cooperation was oriented towards achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children and awakening social conscience with regard to child rights.

5. The Andean subregional programme (Programa para la region Andina (PROANDES)) has shown that indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian community organizations are no longer passive beneficiaries of basic services, and have started to demand and manage these services. At the same time, a successful urban model for service delivery has strengthened public institutions and has led municipalities to adopt national social policies in favour of children, facilitate inter-institutional coordination and promote child and community participation. The Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean provided resources for developing local information systems that influenced local and national decisions on social policy.

6. Ecuador's political situation has placed citizenship and peaceful democracy on the public agenda. Continuous advocacy with political parties has shown society's openness to children's problems, as well as the will to solve them.

7. The internal reform process of UNICEF, through the Management Excellence Programme (MEP), and the conclusions of the MTR established the managerial and programmatic bases for the new strategy focusing on intersectoral action and a new dimension of team management.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

8. The Government's 1997 Social Charter proposes to reduce poverty through national social policies and programmes for health, basic sanitation, education, integrated care for children, employment generation, housing, and urban and rural development. It proposes to increase the number of beneficiaries with access to water and basic sanitation services, and also to increase the number of children who complete the fourth grade.

9. The objectives of UNICEF cooperation in support of the Social Charter are to: (a) ensure broad consensus in public policy formulation based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, with strategies tested at the local level; (b) strengthen communities so that they can support and apply national policies at the municipal level; (c) establish, in selected municipalities, systems for the integrated protection of all children that combine actions in health, education and environment, focusing on the most needy; (d) increase and redirect resources to overcome ethnic, gender and geographical inequities and thus fulfil the commitments of the NPA; and (e) promote social and community participation as well as citizenship education within the framework of enhancing participation to advance children's and women's rights.

10. The proposed strategy builds on prior programmes. Social policies, which previously focused on child survival and the commitments of the World Summit for Children, will now be guided by the two Conventions. Local-level action to mitigate the effects of poverty will be transformed progressively into (a) a system for the integrated protection of children within a legal regulatory framework; (b) coordinated institutional networks that provide services with community participation; and (c) guaranteed and increasing resources. Information and communication actions will focus on education for citizenship in order to empower people to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

11. The programme will operate at the national level to formulate public policies for the social sectors. At the local level, it will aim to build capacity within communities, especially among women, to exercise their rights. It will also strengthen the capacity of municipalities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to fulfil programme goals and objectives. The programme will serve 200,000 families and 800,000 children and adolescents, 60 per cent of whom are indigenous and of African descent, located in 15 of the country's poorest municipalities. Three intersectoral programmes are proposed in order to achieve the programme objectives.

12. The programme on social policies and the child rights approach will support the formulation of national social policies. It will create the basis for the integrated protection system that aims to reduce inequalities in access to and quality of services. The main strategies will be advocacy and technical support for legal, institutional and procedural reforms at national and local levels in order to: (a) increase public investment and resource allocation to benefit children and women; (b) institutionalize public consultation as a mechanism for developing public policies both nationally and at the local level; (c) adopt a gender framework for public policies and in information systems; (d) formalize the system for the integrated protection of children; (e) establish national and local information systems; and (f) establish alliances between government institutions, NGOs and community organizations.

13. The programme of local systems for integrated child protection will strengthen local counterparts to apply effectively social policies aimed at reducing inequities and disparities. The programme aims to strengthen the capacity of women, community organizations, NGOs and municipalities to implement a system for a more holistic approach to protection measures for children and women. The strategy consists of: (a) organizing networks of quality basic services, with community participation, covering the entire population of selected areas; (b) providing technical cooperation and training for developing, jointly with municipalities, local information systems, increasing their capacity for social management, intersectoral coordination, and incorporating NGOs and communities in social planning; (c) providing technical cooperation and training for families, women and community organizations in local participatory processes; (d) collaborating with the association of municipalities to extend

the integrated protection system to other areas; (e) mobilizing resources to implement the system in other areas; and (f) evaluating and systematizing experiences in order to contribute to national policy formulation and consolidate the integrated protection system at the national level.

14. The programme for enhancing participation to advance children's and women's rights aims to empower families and communities to create an enabling environment that will support the national goals of constructing a democratic and peaceful society as a prerequisite for advancing children's and women's rights. The programme will promote education in citizenship and conscientious participation for effective application of the rights of children, adolescents and women. The principal strategies will be to: (a) design educational methods to solve disagreements and conflict and for education in moral values as a basis of citizenship; (b) influence family and community attitudes and practices, especially regarding the role of men in child care, and strengthen the demand for social services; (c) communicate widely to develop a culture of respect for the rights of children, adolescents and women; (d) promote a multi-cultural view of democracy, communication and education; and (e) advocate with decision makers to raise awareness and increase the sense of social responsibility with regard to the rights of children and women.

15. The country programme will be managed according to the principles of MEP and, given its intersectoral character, will be operated within UNICEF by management teams with shared responsibilities. The programme will be closely linked to the ongoing PROANDES and Amazon subregional programmes and provide continued support in the current geographical areas of cooperation as well as starting activities in some of the poorest municipalities of the Costa, Sierra and Oriente regions of the country. Alliances with mayors, NGOs and grass-roots organizations will be strengthened. Inter-agency coordination will continue to support actions in the health sector and programmes for sustainable development. United Nations agencies, through their ongoing efforts in preparing a Common Country Assessment, already have agreed to broad areas of support to national development priorities. Furthermore, they also have supported the Government in developing a national poverty map, which has helped in identifying geographical and population priorities for action. The proposed strategy is in accord with ongoing concerted efforts in developing a well-coordinated United Nations development assistance to Ecuador.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1999-2003 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Social policies and the child rights approach	1 500	1 500	3 000
Local systems for integrated child protection	2 500	12 000	14 500
Enhancing participation to advance children's and women's rights	1 000	1 000	2 000
Total	5 000	14 500	19 500

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.